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Skills Capital and Inclusivity in Men's Roller Derby

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Abstract

Engaging with debates on the potential of sports to be inclusive, this research presents an analysis of the impact of capital on inclusivity in men's roller derby, an alternative sport. Through qualitative interviews and participant observation of a men's roller derby team based in South Yorkshire, skills capital is shown to have a detrimental impact on the goal of inclusivity. Skills capital is a form of symbolic capital that grants the bearer significant freedom to engage in non-conforming behaviour within a group setting. Given the commitment to inclusivity within the sport, this non-conforming behaviour has the potential to be transformative, but more frequently replicates the hegemonic masculine practices of mainstream sport. This renders the goal to be more inclusive problematic and difficult to achieve in practice even within alternative sporting spaces.

Key Words

Symbolic Capital, Skills Capital, Roller Derby, Inclusivity, Expected Masculinity

It can be difficult to pin down 'inclusivity' to one definition. Anderson's (2009) theory of inclusive masculinity explores how an environment of decreased homohysteria enables gay men to find inclusive spaces within sport, an idea explored further by others (Piedra et al, 2017). Still further, researchers explore the potential of sex-integrated sports to enable women to be included (Channon et al, 2015). Although such research identifies ways in which sport does include, studies on community and identity in sport have argued that, although many sporting spaces, especially alternative ones, make claims for inclusiveness, such spaces often reproduce exclusion through adherence to the dominant gender order and norms of hegemonic masculinity (Burdsey, 2008; Rannikko et al, 2016).

Rannikko et al (2016) identify significant differences in the roller derby community due to its explicit aim to provide a space for women and non-stereotypically athletic bodies. Roller derby as a women's game has been explored extensively in recent years, with researchers concluding the sport is inclusive and welcoming (Carlson, 2010; Farrance, 2014; Alexander, 2016). Although community accounts continue to position roller derby as inclusive (Flood, 2013; Copland, 2014; McManus, 2015; Morgan, 2016), its drive for serious recognition reveals areas of tension, such as that between professionalism and passion, with a "tendency towards homogenisation in roller derby" (Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2014: 108), as those more 'alternative' skaters are replaced by those who "really like sport" (Breeze, 2015: 2).

Originally a women-only sport from the USA, roller derby, a full-contact team sport played on roller skates, has spread throughout the world and is played by all genders. Despite gaining in popularity, men's roller derby has grown slowly and is still regarded as something of a "niche sport within a niche sport" (Goodman, 2016). Bonnie Thunders, one of the sport's most well-known athletes, suggested in an interview that men who play roller derby "aren't your typical athletes…It's kind of secondary to the more popular sports, which allows it to attract the people who didn't fit in in the primary sports,". (Morgan, 2016). It is important to explore the inclusive possibilities of men's roller derby and consider how the tension between inclusivity and competition, increasingly central to roller derby more generally, plays out within a men's team. As one of the first men's teams in the UK, and the first to explicitly welcome trans and non-binary skaters, SYRD, the team under discussion in this article, is ripe for such an analysis.

The findings of my research demonstrate that men's roller derby can be an inclusive space, but also that significant challenges must be addressed. One such challenge was that though high levels of skills capital led to secure group membership and enabled non-conforming behaviour, with potential to be transformative, more frequently those who had accumulated such capital replicated the hegemonic masculine practices of mainstream sport. The similarity with women's roller derby is clear: serious and athletic men who *really like sport* are more highly regarded, and those men who aren't typical athletes lose out. Although research using Putnam's (2000) conception of bonding and bridging capital, as a specifically *social* capital, is commonly used within analyses of team and community sports (Darcy et al, 2014; Lindstrom et al, 2011), in this article I use capital in the Bourdieusian sense and focus specifically on *individuals* endowed with embodied cultural capital within the roller derby community, and the impact their actions had upon the ability of the team as a whole to maintain an inclusive stance.

Social and Cultural Capital in Sport

Bourdieu (1984) conceives of sport as a field where one accumulates cultural capital, which requires personal investment of time. Embodied cultural capital is an integral part of the person, cannot be transmitted in the same way as objectified capital, or cultural goods, and is unrecognised as capital (Bourdieu, 1986), with the result that it functions symbolically. Symbolic capital is "the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition" (Bourdieu, 1990: 138), or as Jenkins (2014) argues, answers the question of whose definition of a situation counts. Though Bourdieu acknowledges constant power struggle, the advantage remains with those who possess greater capital. Bourdieu employs Goffman's (1967) notion of a sense of one's place, analogous to Bourdieu's own 'feel for the game' (1984) to argue that this understanding is a practical mastery of one's social situation, which implies that individuals accept their position in a field of action (1985; 1990).

According to Fletcher, "sports, like any social form, constitute a particular field that defines the activities and qualities conferring symbolic capital. In engaging with a particular sports field, individuals become subject to and assimilate the particular habitus characteristic of the field" (2008: 317). The habitus of roller derby is quite distinct. Modern

roller derby was conceived in 2001 as a women-only sport (Breeze, 2010; Sailors, 2013), and adherence to DIY and alternative ethics were an integral part of its development (Beaver, 2012; Pavlidis, 2012). Initially a space for women to have the freedom to be athletic and aggressive, whilst also part of a cooperative community, the sport of roller derby expanded to include men (Fletcher, 2014; Pavlidis and Connor, 2015). This involvement has not always been welcomed and men have frequently been reminded that they are a small minority within the sport; that roller derby is not 'for' them (D'Andrea, 2011; Proven, 2014).

Despite a growing body of literature on roller derby, little explores capital explicitly. Parry (2016) explores the erotic capital of women derby skaters, and in Fletcher (2017) I explore the impact of capital upon skaters' freedom to express themselves through clothing. Like Parry, researchers have expanded the concept of capital to enable them to explore more specific fields. The theory of subcultural capital, first outlined by Thornton (1995), has been used as a lens through which to explore sporting cultures, including lifestyle sports such as the various forms of surfing (Wheaton and Beal, 2003; Dant and Wheaton, 2007) and skateboarding (Atencio et al, 2009; Glenney and Mull, 2018; Willing et al, 2018). Analyses of subcultural capital are seen more rarely in studies of team sports (Fairley and O'Brien, 2018). More recently, such concepts as temporal capital (O'Connor, 2018a) and network capital (O'Connor, 2018b) have been suggested to offer even more specificity from within a subculture.

In line with this expansion, then, within the habitus of roller derby, I argue that skills capital functions as cultural or symbolic capital. Skills capital, as the name implies, is based upon competence, or upon skill. Skill has taken time to accumulate and is not readily transmitted. It is important to note that often, but not always, this accumulation has occurred through time devoted to other related sports and activities before playing roller derby. Thus, skills capital in roller derby is more readily gained, not by those for whom roller derby was created – a sport for those who don't like sport (Breeze, 2013), but for those who really did like sport. It is distinct from social capital in that it does not depend upon a network of connections, though increased skills capital does tend to lead to an increase in social capital for the individual. This form of capital also differs from physical capital and bodily capital because it is not only about appearance and physical ability (Hutson, 2013), but a whole raft of physical and mental competencies enabling successful performances of roller derby. It also differs from erotic capital, which is more readily available to women (Konjer et al, 2019; Parry, 2016) and represents power gained over the *audience* because individuals who have accumulated skills capital have more power to impact the ethos of the *team*, which in turn affects inclusivity when these powerful individuals encourage the adoption of practices which replicate mainstream sports.

Inclusivity and Forms of Capital

Inclusivity in sport, even alternative sports, is a problematic concept at best, despite research into 'inclusive' forms of masculinity (Anderson, 2009; Channon et al, 2015; Piedra et al, 2017). Behind a stated desire for inclusivity within the Amsterdam World Cup, an amateur football competition and multicultural festival, Burdsey finds "overt displays of

masculinity, narcissism and heteronormativity (2008: 266) which marginalises "men who do not embody the dominant masculine script" (2008: 274). Though lifestyle sports make claims of 'openness', these communities "quickly begin to regulate the habitus of their members…revealing, for example, who actually is or can be an authentic member of the community" (Rannikko et al, 2016: 1096). Members possessing subcultural symbolic capital tend towards characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, muscular strength and agility (Rannikko et al, 2016). Interestingly, despite the typical image of a member of a lifestyle sports community as 'masculine', Rannikko et al find a shared ideology of equality to be considered as an essential characteristic for participation (2016: 1106), suggesting that the ethos, if not the practice itself, remains inclusive.

Research into the dark side of social capital (Jarvie, 2007; Palmer and Thompson, 2007; Long, 2008; Groenveld and Ohl, 2010) indicates that, additionally, social capital can help to maintain and reproduce normative frameworks in which an idealised notion of sport as exclusively beneficial is revealed as contradictory (Numerato and Baglioni, 2011). Such frameworks are suggestive of Messner's (2002) televised sports manhood formula, which rewards practices of hegemonic masculinity. This masculine habitus is often privileged even in mixed gender environments (Atencio et al, 2009).

Wellard (2002) explores this same notion with reference to a variation on hegemonic masculinity he terms 'exclusive'. He argues that attempts to 'do' sport in alternative ways can end up reinforcing established sports practices, that social capital is still based on successful performances of 'exclusive masculinity': i.e. competitiveness, aggression, power and assertiveness (Wellard, 2002; 2006). Displays of exclusive masculinities exclude many people because "experiencing the thrill of physical activity is invariably incumbent upon one's ability to conform to social constructions of what is understood to be appropriate sporting performance" (Wellard, 2006: 106). An inability to perform the right sort of masculinity limits a person's enjoyment so that, even if not excluded, they are unable to experience the same pleasures as one who embodies hegemonic masculinity more successfully.

Wellard later refigured this concept to discuss instead "expected sporting masculinity" (2016: 3), suggesting that rather than excluding, these bodily displays compelled a specific performance of accepted forms of masculinity. Critiquing Anderson's (2009) concept of inclusive masculinity, Wellard (2016) maintains that although there is slippage in the meanings associated with 'real' and 'authentic' masculinity, his research demonstrates continued beliefs and ideas that there is an authentic version of masculinity, which in turn reinforces gender binaries. Both 'exclusive' and 'expected' concepts of masculinities suggest that Wellard's call for a determination of "whether there are forms of competition which are more inclusive" (2002: 245) remains unanswered.

Even within sport that prides itself on being inclusive, these exclusionary practices may be found. Jenkins (2014) explores non-conforming behaviour, similar to that which Goffman (1959) characterises as inappropriate or embarrassing. Observing that "non-conforming behaviour, deviance if you like, may come most easily to those whose group membership is secure in the mainstream. Insecure membership may thus encourage conforming behaviour" (Jenkins, 2014: 152). This argument implies that deviance occurs

from the centre, not the margins. Embodied cultural capital, in the form of skills capital, enables the bearer to be secure in their group membership. They are too valuable to lose. Such an individual may become what Goffman terms a 'dark' secret, or a fact "about a team which it knows and conceals and which [is] incompatible with the image of self that the team attempts to maintain before its audience" (Goffman, 1959: 141). Thus, the team carries the ethos of inclusivity, without necessarily its attendant practices.

Methodology

The data discussed in this article come from an ethnography of the men's roller derby team, South Yorkshire Roller Derby (SYRD), focused on identity, community, and belonging. SYRD formed in 2011 as a men's team, redefining its membership policy in 2015 to explicitly welcome trans and non-binary skaters, later operating under an 'open gender' policy. Despite this increasing commitment to inclusivity, SYRD frequently struggled with low membership and engagement. A year before I commenced fieldwork, the team saw a mass exodus that halved membership numbers, and a year after fieldwork was completed, further loss of members led to a hiatus from both the Men's Roller Derby Association (MRDA) and the British Championships competition.

Although already established within the team, before fieldwork began, I met with the committee to explain the research and gain formal access to the field. I explained the research to members, seeking explicit consent from each to include their perspectives in my observations. I used an ethnographic approach consisting of participant observation supplemented by interviews. The observation involved attendance at and engagement in training sessions, games, and social events, although as a committee member and referee, I also engaged in considerable administration and organization throughout the year. At times, it was difficult to separate 'research' from 'not research', so inextricably linked were life and roller derby. For both ethical and mental health reasons, I carved out spaces that would not be part of the research. These included online communications, my experiences with the women's roller derby team, and social occasions that were not explicitly 'roller derby'. Thus, I attempted to ensure participants were aware of when I would be a researcher, and when I would not be.

Though it may sound simple, negotiating my multiple roles was anything but. During fieldwork, I was a member of the team, an insider (Chavez, 2008; DeLyser, 2001; Taylor 2011). However, the data represents a partial perspective from the standpoint (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986) of a referee, i.e. both insider and outsider. This role necessitated greater attention to impartiality, but also offered an interesting and unusual view of action. I empathise with Adele Pavlidis' feelings of "love and loathing" (Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2014: 90), as I too battled with feelings of not belonging. Rather than not having enough of the right kind of love and desire for the sport, I came to understand that my problems stemmed in part from a lack of capital within the team. I had never progressed beyond B team level as a skater, I had been a line up manager for the B team, and I was a self-taught and fairly low-level referee. Perhaps it was being a referee, physically and emotionally somewhat outside the action, that led me to feel a little excluded. Despite being a researcher and therefore in some ways having the strongest voice, I never felt I had

power, authority, or influence within the team and remained somewhat on the margins. This internal struggle led me to pay greater attention to issues of belonging and inclusivity raised by others. The focus on Donald Thump is a result of the ubiquity of commentary on his actions throughout interviews with participants, as well as my own observations. The individual participants quoted here are representative of the whole team. SYRD and all names used are pseudonyms, though I have tried to choose alternatives in keeping with the playfulness of roller derby naming practices.

PSEUDONYM	ROLE IN TEAM
South Yorkshire Roller Derby (SYRD)	Men's roller derby team in South Yorkshire
Bishop Bash	Current skater and ex-committee member
Betty Boop	Current team management
Weave Coogan	Current skater and ex-chair
Dr Doom	Ex-skater and committee member
Donald Thump	Current skater and coach, and ex-committee member
Home Sweet Harmicide	Ex-skater and committee member
Hinkley Sea	Current skater
Damnit Jammit	Current skater and chair
L'Appel Du Vide	Ex-team management
Teazer Light	Ex-skater and committee member
Zoya the Destroya	Current team management

FIG 1. TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS AND ROLE WITHIN TEAM DURING PERIOD OF FIELDWORK

I kept detailed field notes that were either written at the time, or as soon as possible after individual training sessions and games. Additionally, I conducted in-depth interviews with seventeen members, ex-members, and volunteers, using purposive sampling to include a range of voices. These interviews took the form of life histories, focused on experiences of sport, and the interviewees' time with SYRD. They were deliberately conversational, and semi-structured: I had an interview schedule or map which outlined specific questions I was interested in asking, but interviewees were encouraged to take the conversation in any direction. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As I transcribed each interview, I sent a copy to the interviewee to confirm they were happy with it.

As an overarching analytical framework, I used situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) as the focus on the situation, rather than individuals, enables an acknowledgment of the multiple and shifting nature of the situation but is also deliberately flexible. I used NVivo to conduct preliminary coding on field notes and interviews, which helped to create maps of the situation. I mapped throughout the process of analysis, which ran concurrently to fieldwork. Clarke (2005), suggests the researcher can 'see' collective action directly and empirically, and recommends asking what are the patterns of collective commitment and what are the salient social worlds operating here? A commitment to belonging and inclusivity became clear according to this process, and mapping this action, or practice, demonstrated that notions of inclusivity were important to team members, but also that significant barriers to becoming a fully inclusive team were apparent. In the following analysis, I explore one of these barriers; the extensive impact of skills capital.

High Skills Capital and Expected Masculinity

In November 2015, I refereed a scrimmage between SYRD and another team. In field notes I wrote that the game had been "rough and aggressive – but needlessly so; no strategic advantage from the hits" (Field notes, Sunday 22 November). Players had been hyper-aggressive, shouting and yelling. The head referee had taken time-outs to tell bench managers to calm their skaters down several times. It was an unenjoyable game to referee. Several of the skaters had been unprofessional and unsporting. However, the other team's bench manager congratulated SYRD on their win, saying they had been 'clinical'. Members agreed with that assessment, stating that heads were calm, and they played their game. I talked with the line-up manager, who said "the boys seemed pretty happy with the game, and felt it was calm and controlled" (Field notes, Sunday 29 November), thus maintaining the impression that all members saw things the same way (Goffman, 1959). 'Playing their game' and being 'calm' were phrases that occurred frequently in discussions of games, both as a pre-game goal, and an assessment afterwards. These strategies and emotions were vital to creating a good impression. In this context, 'calm' did not mean free from excitement or passion, rather it referred to achieving a win using the strategies and gameplay that had been developed and drilled in training. For SYRD at this time, calm was used to describe rough, aggressive play dominated by shouting; at each other, at opponents, and at referees.

In interview, Coogan talked about how this behaviour signalled the passion of team members; seeing it as a positive.

> My very first Sunday session was a session that there was a big, big argument between Teazer and Donald Thump. A big argument, but you know that showed me that there's proper passion in the team…it didn't faze me at all. (Coogan Interview, 31 May 2016).

This reflects the discourse that aggression and anger equalled 'passion', and therefore was part of playing their game. Goffman suggests that the familiarity of team members forces them to "define one another as persons 'in the know'" (1959: 88), for whom a front cannot be maintained. This was not the case within SYRD, where, even in committee meetings (where one might expect to see some 'back stage' work), this front of calm was maintained. Deviations from this discourse were effectively silenced. Only ex-members and those on the margins acknowledged that some behaviours could not be contained within this discourse of calm. Harmicide talked about his first training session, the same session Coogan described as displaying passion:

> Donald Thump started screaming and hollering at Teazer and then threw his helmet against the wall and cracked it or something, and that was my first ever Sunday, so that was quite a baptism of fire into SYRD. And then I had Hinkley and L'Appel du Vide trying to convince me to not leave because it wasn't always like that [laughing] so that was a bit kind of oh, okay. But everyone was like, oh, it's okay, he does that sometimes don't worry about it. (Harmicide Interview, 15 January 2016).

The behaviour of one individual, Donald Thump, had become SYRD's open secret. Harmicide did not understand why no one had ever stood up to Thump. "I just don't get it. I don't know what his power is, what his hold over people is, I just don't understand it"

(Harmicide Interview, 15 January 2016). In several interviews, members and ex—members talked about similar issues; issues which had been brushed aside by team management.

In the same way that high-level skaters had more freedom to express themselves through dress, this high-level skater was granted significant freedoms to behave in ways which were detrimental to inclusivity and a positive ethos without censure. Thump and Coogan engaged in overtly hegemonic behaviour; focused on the importance of the win and were aggressive and violent in line with Wellard's research around the concept of 'expected sporting masculinity' (2016). The accumulated skills capital of both of these skaters granted them the power to define the team and control the discourse.

How Skills Capital Negatively Impacts Inclusivity

Donald Thump was a coach and skater, one of the most skilled players in the team. This 'skills capital' enabled Thump to have a greater impact on the team than others. There were two sides to Thump's behaviour. Doom said: "he's great if you do what he thinks is the right thing to do or if you are seen to be skilled and talented" (Doom Interview, 8 January 2016). Some members were supportive of his training methods and ideas, believing him an excellent coach. Thump commanded respect. He was very secure in his membership. Jenkins (2014) and Goffman (1959) indicate that such security allows greater freedom for non-conforming or deviant behaviour, in contrast to the conformity of less secure members. Current members, therefore, were cautious about saying anything negative, referring to his poor behaviour as 'nonsense', dismissing its potential impact.

Training run by Thump was characterised by focus and attention. Skaters didn't always master drills or make obvious progress, but they listened attentively. He often explained not just the drill, but how the skills practiced translated into game play, how they could be countered by another team, and how skaters might respond. Most agreed this was good coaching and had sufficient respect for Thump and his skills to concentrate through longwinded explanations: an example of the contrast between conforming and non-conforming or deviant behaviour (Jenkins, 2014). Thump, however, was not content to listen to others.

> Donald Thump would deliberately talk whilst the coach was talking or turn his back and start chuckling with somebody…so it was either undermining them that way or he would ask questions that he knew were deliberately difficult. Not in sort of difficult to answer, but just if a drill was designed to do one thing, he would ask a question about whether you could do something slightly different. (Doom Interview, 8 January 2016).

When other coaches ran training, Thump would routinely disrupt the session and derail the coach's explanation. Contrary to Cohen's (2008) claim that non-conformity in roller derby leads to alienation, Thump seemed immune.

If Thump wasn't listening to a drill, other skaters stopped listening too. Negative behaviour spread in a way that made it difficult for other coaches.

> I noticed Coogan/Thump joking and talking during drill explanations quite a lot…disrespecting Hinkley. It was a marked contrast to how skaters behave when Thump (and to some extent Coogan) are running drills. Thump frequently interrupted Hinkley to 'clarify' drills. Boop and Zoya were talking while the drills were happening. Thump was questioning the drill. Coogan was making stupid comments about 'heavy petting'. But then, I was doing it too. Poor behaviour is contagious! (Field notes, Wednesday 23 March 2016).

Even as I was making notes about this happening, I found myself influenced by Thump's behaviour. Such reactions ensured that Thump's sessions seemed more organised and effective than sessions run by other coaches.

During my observation of SYRD, I witnessed many examples of unsporting conduct initiated by Thump. He frequently employed the tactic of 'flopping': deliberately attempting to draw a penalty on an opponent, which was never called by referees. In field notes, I acknowledged my reluctance to call this penalty on Thump, for fear of unpleasantness, supporting Jenkins (2014) discussion of conformity by those on the edge of a community. Often, Thump employed aggressive tactics on track, staying just the right side of legal play. His aggressive style influenced other skaters to do similarly. During one game:

> Donald Thump was blocking in a hyper aggressive manner. He'd go in for hits that were unnecessary…to target specific blockers in revenge hits. His aim seemed to be to get all the other skaters riled up…by the end, he was shouting at the refs, the other team, his own teammates…especially his own teammates. If they did something he didn't agree with, he was yelling at them – not in a friendly way either (Field notes, Sunday 22 November 2015).

This hyper-aggressive style of play had two main impacts on the team. In games against outside opponents, Thump's aggression and unsporting behaviour spread to other skaters, who began to behave in similar ways, leading to games that were fraught with tension, and less enjoyable. In scrimmages within the team at training sessions, individual skaters were targeted, a style of training Thump employed, being tough on skaters to encourage them to improve, which often resulted in demotivation instead.

Regaining Inclusion

Partway through fieldwork, Donald Thump left. Training became collegial and relaxed. Though this was on his own terms, and skaters continued to speak of him respectfully, Thump had begun to alienate previously supportive members.

> Jammit opened up about how Thump got frustrated with things after Brussels and was unwilling or unable to relinquish control despite officially doing just that. Jammit also said that Thump had issues with him asking Hammer to take on the role of officiating officer. Thump had disagreed with

> the decision, and made his feelings clear by being quite unpleasant about it. He had then taken his frustration out on Zoya, who was really upset about it. (Field notes, Saturday 27 August 2016).

On his return, Thump immediately reassumed authority and the rest of the team welcomed him back, focusing on his skill as a skater and coach, despite the issues Jammit touched upon. Thus, in dramaturgical terms (Goffman, 1959), while Jammit held the lead role in the team performance as chair of SYRD, Thump was directing the show. His definition of the situation was the one that counted. Beaver (2012) argued that women's roller derby does not reproduce hierarchical structures, but at least informally, there was a clear hierarchy within SYRD, with Thump most often at the top.

This new equilibrium didn't last. By October, Thump withdrew again. Attending training, but not engaging:

> Bishop points out that, at the moment, he's just watching. After Bishop leaves him, suggesting he joins in, Donald Thump continues making snide comments, loud enough for Bishop to hear. Bishop turns but doesn't respond or engage with Thump further. Nobody else does either, for the rest of the session. (Field notes, Sunday 2 October 2016).

Thump seemed to be approaching the point where considerable skills capital was not enough to offset his unpredictable and disruptive behaviour. The destructive nature of this way of being was highlighted by comments from several interviews. Skaters suggested that the good reputation SYRD enjoyed in the early days as a fun team to play had given way to a reputation as unsporting and antagonistic due to the influence of Thump and other skaters with similar attitudes. I asked several interviewees if they really thought Thump had this much influence, and they said he did. Talking to the skaters, it was clear that it was not only Thump they found problematic, but the environment created and supported by his actions; the environment where disrespecting referees and teammates was commonplace and targeting individuals to encourage improvement was seen as a valid coaching tactic. This environment seemed to capture the worst aspects of hegemonic masculinity, whereby cruelty and ridicule were seen as acceptable in the drive for athletic success. There was a sense that this behaviour should have been challenged sooner, and more decisively; and that in a less democratic, less *inclusive* team, Thump would have been asked to leave long before he was.

Conclusion

The literature suggests that cultural capital is attained through successful masculine performances, therefore, one way of analysing the experiences detailed in this article is through the lens of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), with which SYRD appeared to have a curious relationship. On the one hand, members of SYRD replicated some of the problems of men's sport, whilst on the other, members were trying to create a different way of playing sport, which was more cooperative and open, and reflected a more inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2009). Thus, the community of SYRD was a site of struggle (Carter and Baliko, 2017). The difficulties inherent in dealing with hegemonic masculinity as

embodied by Donald Thump mirrored the difficulty the wider community of men's roller derby had in dealing with 'toxic' masculinity. This struggle could be thought of in terms of what Connell termed 'crisis tendencies' (1987).

Within SYRD, skills capital was gained through successful performances of hegemonic masculinity. Whether characterised as 'exclusive' (Wellard, 2002) or 'expected' (Wellard, 2016), this capital was seemingly denied to those who failed to measure up. Therefore, although the risk of deviating from masculine norms might have been worth it in creating a more equitable training environment (Risman et al, 2012), it seems that overt displays of masculinity could still marginalise those who did not perform it 'correctly' (Burdsey, 2008). This exemplifies Messner's discussion of the Lombardian ethic that winning is everything (1992), and his notion of the televised sports manhood formula (2002), in that practices of hegemonic masculinity were rewarded. Whereas it is argued that women's roller derby functions differently (Ranniko et al, 2016), men's roller derby often did not. Although Thump's actions were unusual, several members were complicit, either following his lead or failing to censure his behaviour.

Instead of commitment, perceived skill in the form of skills capital led to inclusion within the league. Thump's non-conforming behaviour was enabled through his secure group membership (Jenkins, 2014) and his high level of skills capital. Although the league strove to be inclusive, and, on some levels, succeeded, this determination to include everyone and therefore make allowances for people, resulted in a situation that was not experienced as inclusive by everyone. Because of a high level of skills capital, excuses were made for some members' behaviour, which would not be tolerated in others. This suggests that, even as inclusive as SYRD members believed the league to be, competitiveness did lead to exclusion (Breeze, 2013). Donald Thump, as an experienced skater, received respect for his skating. He played in ways that physically hurt other members, but because he was controlled and deliberate in his movements, therefore remaining legal according to the rules of roller derby, he escaped censure.

Whether or not skills capital is relevant within women's roller derby remains unexplored. It is difficult to draw direct comparisons, but the tension between inclusivity and professionalisation is equally present in both forms of the sport. Skaters who found they did not belong in women's roller derby were often those who were critical of the drive to be serious and professional (Breeze, 2015; Pavlidis and Fullagar, 2014). Although Pavlidis and Fullagar's discussion of the dark side of roller derby and the experiences of their participants 'Debbie' and 'Lola' suggest that women skaters with a high level of skill do not necessarily experience secure membership and freedom to engage in non-conforming behaviour, the argument that women roller derby players "vie for power between themselves – for the power of authorship, the power to state what and who roller derby is, the power to include/exclude" (2014: 86), however, is suggestive of the marginalisation of certain types of femininities, just as certain types of masculinities came to be marginalised in men's roller derby.

I left the field with a sense of hope that inclusivity is not an impossible challenge. SYRD had made the decision that skills capital was not sufficient to offset problems caused by non-conforming behaviour such as Thump's. A refocusing of the team's ethos to centre

inclusivity over winning, and a commitment to deal with problems rather than allow them to become 'dark secrets' (Goffman, 1959), brought the team together once more. It is interesting to note that unlike in women's roller derby, where Pavlidis and Fullagar found that "many leagues adopted a more masculinist approach to sport management" (2014: 96), SYRD chose to deliberately go down the path of cooperation and the celebration of difference, and it was in their rejection of traditional norms of sport that they found greater inclusivity. Whether this rejection is necessary for inclusivity throughout roller derby requires further exploration.

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